IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A system for gathering network device data, the system comprising:

a first non-volatile memory on a network device, said first memory storing defined device-specific data and being writable via the network and being readable;

a physical read port on the network device, said physical port including a set of one or more signals defining a physical interface and a protocol for reading said data from said first memory; and

data-gathering ~~means~~ circuitry physically separate from but compatible with said read port and programmed to read said data from said first memory in accordance with said protocol, said data-gathering ~~means~~ circuitry including a second non-volatile memory for recording said data read from said first memory, thereby enabling a user to gather and record network device data including hardware or software revision indicia ~~specific to the network device~~.

2. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 1, wherein said second non-volatile memory is partitioned to include plural storage locations for data of various types, said types including network device identification data.

3. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 2, wherein said network device identification data include one or more of the hostname, the Internet protocol (IP) address, the medium access control (MAC) address, one or more common language Location Identifier (CLLI) codes and physical device location information for the network device.

4. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 2, wherein said types further include network device configuration data.

5. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 4, wherein said network device configuration data includes hardware and software configuration data.

6. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 5, wherein said hardware and software configuration data includes hardware and software revision indicia.

7. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 1, wherein said physical port is mounted in an accessible physical location on the network device.

8. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 7 which comprises plural instances of said physical port in at least two distinct physical locations thereon, said plural instances of said physical port providing parallel access to said first non-volatile memory for reading the device-specific data therefrom.

9. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 8, wherein said plural instances of said physical port are at least two instances and wherein said two physical ports are physically located adjacent forward and rearward edges of the network device.

10. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 1, wherein said protocol is bit serial.

11. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 10, wherein said interface and protocol are in accordance with the RS-232 standard.

12. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 1, wherein said data are stored in accordance with a predefined format.

13. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 12, wherein said predefined format is in accordance with the Extensible Markup Language (XML) standard.

14. (Currently Amended) A method of gathering network device data, the method comprising:

providing a network device with a non-volatile memory and with an externally accessible physical data read port thereto, [[and]]

preconfiguring the network device with protocols necessary to cause the network device to automatically initiate communications in response to an external reader being physically coupled to the data read port;

programming one or more predetermined memory locations in the network device with data regarding a defined identification and a defined configuration of the network device, the one or more memory locations being readable by [[an]] the external reader mechanism over the data read port[[.]];

physically coupling the external reader to the data read port; and

automatically initiating communications in response to the physical coupling, the automatically initiated communications transferring at least a portion of said data from the network device to the external reader mechanism.

15. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 14 wherein the external reader mechanism is programmed to read the data from the predetermined memory locations. ~~which further comprises:~~

~~providing a portable reader mechanism external to the network device but physically and logically compatible therewith for reading and recording the programmed data from the network device.~~

16. (Currently Amended) The method of claim [[15]] 14, wherein said programming of the one or more predetermined memory locations is with data stored in a predefined format.

17. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 14 where the external reader mechanism does not have a user interface. ~~16, wherein said providing of the externally accessible physical data read port is in accordance with a predefined physical and logical interface and wherein said providing of said portable reader mechanism is performed in such manner that the reading and recording of the programmed data from the network device is in accordance with a predefined protocol.~~

18. (Currently Amended) The method of claim [[17]] 14, wherein ~~the protocol is bit serial, wherein the interface and protocol~~ the communications are in accordance with the RS-232 standard and wherein the data are stored in a predefined format.

19. (Original) The method of claim 18, wherein the predefined format in which the data are stored is in accordance with the Extensible Markup Language (XML) format.

20. (Original) A computer-readable medium containing a program for gathering network device data by an external reader mechanism from a network device, the program comprising:

instructions residing in the network device for programming one or more memory locations in the network device with data regarding a defined identification and a defined configuration of the network device, the one or more memory locations being readable by an external reader mechanism over an externally accessible physical data read port thereto, said programming instructions being executable responsive to a write command received over a network communication line, and

instructions residing in the network device for providing read access, of the programmed data in the one or more memory locations in the network device, to the external reader mechanism responsive to a read prompt from the external reader mechanism.

21. (Original) The computer-readable medium in accordance with claim 20, which computer readable medium further comprises:

instructions residing in the external reader mechanism for prompting a read of the programmed data in the one or more memory locations in the network device and for storing the data read therefrom in a non-volatile memory location within the external reader mechanism.

22. (Original) The computer-readable medium in accordance with claim 21, wherein the programming of the one or more memory locations within the network device is with data stored in a predefined format and wherein the storing of the programmed data within the external reader mechanism is also in a predefined format.

23. (Currently Amended) A system for gathering network device data comprising:

means for providing a network device with a non-volatile memory and with an externally accessible physical data read port thereto, and

means for programming one or more memory locations in the network device with data indicating what hardware is installed in the ~~regarding a defined identification and a defined configuration of the~~ network device, the one or more memory locations being readable by an external reader mechanism over the data read port.

24. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 23 which further comprises:

means for providing a portable mechanism external to the network device but physically and logically compatible therewith for reading a recording the programmed data from the network device.

25. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 24 wherein said means for providing of the externally accessible physical data read port includes a predefined physical and logical interface and wherein said means for providing of said portable reader mechanism includes means for reading and recording of the programmed data from the network device in accordance with a predefined protocol.

26. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 25 wherein the protocol is bit serial, wherein the interface and protocol are in accordance with the RS-232 standard and wherein the data are stored in a predefined format.

27. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 26 wherein the predefined format in which the data are stored is in accordance with the Extensible Markup Language (XML) format.

28. (Currently Amended) Apparatus for gathering network device data from a network device having a physical port for exporting network device-specific data stored in a memory device therein, the apparatus comprising:

a portable device;

a non-volatile memory within said portable device;

a processor coupled with the non-volatile memory within said portable device; and

a physical port on the portable device, said physical port including a set of one or more signals defining a physical interface and a protocol for reading data from the memory device in the network device,

wherein the non-volatile memory within said portable device is partitioned to include plural storage locations for data of various types, said types including either the hostname, the Internet protocol (IP) address, the medium access control (MAC) address, one or more common language location identifier (CLLI) codes or physical device location information ~~network device identification data~~, thereby enabling a user to gather and record network device data and to transport such network device data to a remote location.

29. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 28, wherein said network device ~~identification~~ data include one or more of the hostname, the Internet protocol (IP) address, the medium access control (MAC) address, one or more common language location identifier (CLLI) codes and physical device location information from the network device.

30. (Original) The apparatus of claim 29, wherein said types further include network device configuration data.

31. (Original) The apparatus of claim 30, wherein said network device configuration data include firmware and software configuration data.

32. (Original) The apparatus of claim 28, wherein said protocol is bit serial.

33. (Original) The apparatus of claim 32, wherein said interface and protocol are in accordance with the RS-232 standard.

34. (Original) The apparatus of claim 28, wherein said data are stored in accordance with a predefined format.

35. (Original) The apparatus of claim 34, wherein said predefined format is in accordance with the Extensible Markup Language (XML) standard.

36. (Currently Amended) A system for gathering network device data from a network device, the system comprising:

a first non-volatile memory on the network device, said first memory storing ~~defined device-specific~~ firmware configuration data and being writable via the network and being readable;

a physical read port on the network device, said physical port including a set of one or more signals defining a physical interface and a protocol for reading said data from said first memory; and

a portable reader mechanism programmed to read said data from said first memory in accordance with said protocol, said portable reader mechanism including a second non-volatile memory for recording said data read from said first memory, thereby enabling a user to gather and record firmware configuration data ~~network device data specific to the network device~~;

wherein said portable reader mechanism is configured so that a user can gather and record the ~~network device data specific to the network device~~ firmware configuration data without relying on a network connection.

37. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 36, wherein said second non-volatile memory is partitioned to include plural storage locations for data of various types, said types including network device identification data.

38. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 37, wherein said network device identification data includes one or more of the hostname, the Internet protocol (IP) address, the medium access control (MAC) address, one or more common language Location Identifier (CLLI) codes and physical device location information for the network device.

39. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 37, wherein said types further include network device configuration data.

40. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 39, wherein said network device configuration data includes hardware and software configuration data.

41. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 40, wherein said hardware and software configuration data includes hardware and software revision indicia.

42. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 36, wherein said physical port of said network device is mounted in an accessible physical location.

43. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 42 further comprising a plurality of physical ports in at least two distinct physical locations thereon, said plurality of physical ports providing parallel access to said first non-volatile memory for reading the device-specific data therefrom.

44. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 43, wherein at least one of the plurality of physical ports is located on a front edge of the network device and at least a second of the plurality of physical ports is located on a rear edge of the network device.

45. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 36, wherein said protocol is bit serial.

46. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 45, wherein said interface and protocol are in accordance with the RS-232 standard.

47. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 36, wherein said data are stored in accordance with a predefined format.

48. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 47, wherein said predefined format is in accordance with the Extensible Markup Language (XML) standard.

49. (Currently Amended) A method for gathering network device data, the method comprising:

providing a network device with a non-volatile memory and with an externally accessible physical data read port thereto;

programming one or more memory locations in the network device with data ~~regarding a defined identification and a defined configuration~~ including hardware or software configuration of the network device, the one or more memory locations being readable by an external reader mechanism over the data read port;

providing a portable reader mechanism external to the network device but physically and logically compatible therewith for reading and recording the programmed data from the network device; and

reading the data with an external reader mechanism over the data read port without the presence of network connectivity.

50. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 49, wherein said programming of the one or more memory locations is with data stored in a predefined format.

51. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 50, wherein said providing of the externally accessible physical data read port is in accordance with a predefined physical and logical interface and wherein said providing of said portable reader mechanism is performed in such manner that the reading and recording of the programmed data from the network device is in accordance with a predefined protocol.

52. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 51, wherein the protocol is bit serial, wherein the interface and protocol are in accordance with the RS-232 standard and wherein the data are stored in a predefined format.

53. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 52, wherein the predefined format in which the data are stored is in accordance with the Extensible Markup Language (XML) format.

54. (Currently Amended) A system for gathering network device data from a network device having a physical port for exporting network device-specific data stored in a memory device therein, the apparatus comprising:

a hand held portable device;

a non-volatile memory within said portable device;

a processor coupled with the non-volatile memory within said portable device; and

a physical port on the portable device, said physical port including a set of one or more signals defining a physical interface and a protocol for reading data from the memory device in the network device,

wherein the non-volatile memory within said portable device is partitioned to include plural storage locations for data of various types, said types including network device identification data, thereby enabling a user to gather and record network device data and to transport such network device data to a remote location,

and further wherein said hand held portable device is configured to allow said user to gather and record network device data specific to the network device without relying on a network connection.

55. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 54, wherein said network device identification data include one or more of the hostname, the Internet protocol (IP) address, the medium access control (MAC) address, one or more common language location identifier (CLLI) codes and physical device location information from the network device.

56. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 55, wherein said types further include network device configuration data.

57. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 56, wherein said network device configuration data include firmware and software configuration data.

58. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 54, wherein said protocol is bit serial.

59. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 58, wherein said interface and protocol are in accordance with the RS-232 standard.

60. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 54, wherein said data are stored in accordance with a predefined format.

61. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 60, wherein said predefined format is in accordance with the Extensible Markup Language (XML) standard.